

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL AFFAIRS**

April 13, 2021

8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative Dan Ortiz
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Mike Cronk

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: REAL ID IMPLEMENTATION IN RURAL ALASKA

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JENNA WRIGHT, Deputy Director
Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
Department of Administration (DOA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a PowerPoint presentation titled, "Real ID Update," dated 4/13/21, as part of the presentation on REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska.

CAROL PISCOYA, Vice President
Community Services Division
Kawerak, Inc.
Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as part of the presentation on REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska.

CHERIE MCCONNELL, Director
Tribal Affairs Program
Kawerak, Inc.

Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as part of the presentation on REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska.

RICHARD PETERSON, President

Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as part of the presentation on REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska.

VIVIAN KORTHUIS, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP)
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as part of the presentation on REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:05 AM](#)

CHAIR TIFFANY ZULKOSKY called the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Ortiz, Fields, Cronk, and Zulkosky were present at the call to order. Representative Tarr arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: REAL ID Implementation in Rural Alaska

[8:03:50 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY announced that the only order of business would be a presentation on REAL ID throughout rural Alaska provided by the [Division] of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

[8:04:16 AM](#)

JENNA WRIGHT, Deputy Director, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Administration (DOA), provided a PowerPoint presentation titled, "Real ID Update," dated 4/13/21 [hard copy included in the committee packet]. She stated she will discuss Alaska's Real ID implementation with a specific emphasis on the progress in rural Alaska. She turned to slide 2, "REAL ID: Agenda," and noted she will talk about: what has changed since the last time she spoke to the committee; the key statistics that are used to measure REAL ID; what the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) believes the demand for REAL ID is in the entirety of Alaska as well as a focus on the subset of rural

Alaska; some of the ways that DMV has engaged with rural Alaska partners; and how DMV intends to increase access to REAL ID in a responsible way as the division continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

8:06:05 AM

MS. WRIGHT moved to slide 3, "REAL ID: Updates," and said one significant change was that former President Trump extended the REAL ID [federal] enforcement date by one year to 10/1/21. This gave all Alaskans and Americans an additional year to apply for a REAL ID, which will be almost three years from the time that Alaska started issuing REAL IDs. In addition, Alaska's DMV is in close contact with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) and has joined many other states and the American Association of Airport Executives in voicing support of pushing this date out even further due to the ongoing and unpredictable nature of the pandemic and the inevitable strain that airports will be under as travel capacity starts to increase. There is optimism that the Department of Homeland Security and the Biden Administration will be receptive to those requests for another extension.

MS. WRIGHT continued addressing slide 3. She said another major change was the REAL ID modernization language included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. This was important because the REAL ID Act was written in 2005 when there was much less reliance on electronic systems. This Act paves the way for states to be able to accept some documents electronically and potentially implement mobile ID and driver license solutions. Many of those changes are at least a year or two out because they are dependent on federal regulations being written before states can implement the changes. However, states can implement one change immediately, which is the reduction in the paperwork requirement for Social Security numbers. Currently Alaskans are required to bring in a physical proof of their Social Security number - such as the Social Security card, or W-2, or a 1099. Assuming the regulations are successfully updated, the applicant will be able to verbally share his or her Social Security number with the DMV customer service representative who can then rely on the online verification system without any physical documentation. This step will make it easier for all Alaskans who might not have immediate access to their Social Security documents.

MS. WRIGHT remained on slide 3 and related that Alaska's DMV has issued over 200,000 REAL IDs, which the division is encouraged

by. Since the DMV started issuing REAL IDs, 42 percent of all credentials issued were federally compliant, which has helped Alaska reach 32 percent of all unique active credentials in Alaska being federal compliant. The term "unique" is used because some Alaskans will have an ID and a driver's license and a person can only have the REAL ID star on one.

MS. WRIGHT finished her discussion of slide 3 by noting that customer satisfaction is the cornerstone of everything DMV does and a way the division measures its success. The division had to make quite a few drastic changes to keep staff and Alaskans safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alaskans have been extremely receptive to those changes and modifications.

[8:10:19 AM](#)

MS. WRIGHT spoke to slide 4, "REAL ID: Progress in Alaska." She explained the graph encompasses three major metrics closely tracked by DMV. She said the green bars show the number of REAL IDs given out by month since Alaska began issuing REAL IDs in January 2019. The blue line represents the take rate, or in other words for everyone that walked out of the DMV with a license or ID what is the percentage of people that had a REAL ID star on that credential. The black line shows the cumulative percent to DMV's goal of 250,000. The most notable deviation in this trend visual is the plummeting take rate and issuance in April 2020. March was when awareness of the pandemic began, and many Alaskans were avoiding public spaces for their health and safety. Additionally, the federal deadline for REAL ID was extended at the end of March, thereby losing the sense of urgency that some Alaskans had to get their REAL ID before 10/1/20. The take rate has since bounced back a bit, but at a much slower rate of only 39 percent this year as compared to the over 60 percent take rate seen in first quarter 2020. This slower demand without a subsequent increase as the enforcement date gets closer leads DMV to believe that the demand saturation point for REAL ID has been largely reached. That is also illustrated by the black line which shows that Alaska is about 80 percent of the way to DMV's goal of issuing 250,000 REAL IDs.

[8:12:29 AM](#)

MS. WRIGHT reviewed slide 5, "REAL ID: Demand." She said the table depicts a high-level summary of Alaskans that have federally compliant IDs and how the REAL IDs issued so far are a factor of this overall analysis. Within Alaska's population of just over 730,000 people, DMV estimates that: 365,000 have a

passport; 65,000 are active-duty military or their dependents, all of whom have access to military IDs; and almost 75,000 are members of an Alaskan tribe which gives them access to federally recognized tribal IDs. These other types of IDs are mentioned because the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website lists 20 different types of IDs, other than the REAL ID, that can be used to board aircraft when the REAL ID enforcement date goes into effect.

[8:13:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS inquired about the percentage of tribes that are REAL ID compliant.

MS. WRIGHT replied that tribal IDs themselves do not need to be REAL ID compliant. She said the REAL ID Act put restrictions on state agencies to produce REAL ID compliant driver licenses and IDs, it didn't change the requirements for those other 20 types of identification that TSA will accept. All tribal IDs are recognized by the TSA as government IDs and do not require a second form of ID and an expiration date is not required. It is a bit easier on the requirements for a tribal ID as compared to a state-issued REAL ID.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether all tribes in Alaska issue or make available tribal IDs, for example, if there are 74,000 tribal members then whether all 74,000 of those people have access to a tribal ID.

MS. WRIGHT responded that DMV has not had the opportunity to speak with every one of the more than 200 tribes in Alaska. She said DMV's understanding is that there is a large prevalence of tribal IDs across the state.

[8:15:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS suggested reaching out, whether through the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) or another umbrella organization, to see whether there are gaps with some tribes not issuing tribal IDs. Regarding demand, he surmised that some people with passports will still want to get a REAL ID; he inquired about DMV's analysis of this.

MS. WRIGHT answered that in this analysis DMV understands there is going to be room for some duplication because some people will prefer to have multiple identification cards. While DMV does not have a survey of how many Alaskans want two or more

forms of identification, the division accounted for that in this analysis. She noted that the possible demand of [226,584] depicted on slide 5 for REAL ID doesn't consider that [179,960] people in Alaska are under the age of 18 and don't need a REAL ID to travel, nor does this number include the nearly 65,000 Alaska veterans who have access to Department of Defense IDs. She explained that DMV rounded the number up to 250,000 with the understanding that there was some duplication within the numbers but there isn't a way to know for sure what the exact demand will be because of the element of choice that is there.

MS. WRIGHT finished her review of slide 5 by stating that many Alaskans already have federally compliant identification before the issuance of REAL ID is even considered. Given that 200,000 Alaskans have a REAL ID, a very encouraging picture is painted for Alaska because this number means that the majority of Alaskans who want a REAL ID do already have one. Further, DMV has the capacity to serve those Alaskans who will want a REAL ID this summer prior to the deadline.

8:18:27 AM

MS. WRIGHT discussed the table shown on slide 6, "REAL ID: Rural Alaska Demand." She explained that DMV analyzed the population and the potential demand by 13 regions across the state. The first column in the table shows the total population of each region. Then DMV subtracted the population of cities within each of those regions that have reasonable access to a DMV or a passport facility [column two], arriving at the remaining population [column three]. Then U.S. Census data was used to estimate the number of children under five [column four] and veterans [column five] living in each of the regions because children under five would not need a compliant ID and veterans would have access federally compliant Department of Defense IDs.

8:19:25 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS surmised a REAL ID can only be issued through either a DMV or a passport facility.

MS. WRIGHT replied that REAL IDs cannot be issued at a passport acceptance facility, they can only be issued by DMV or an agent of the DMV. She explained she put [passport facilities] on this slide because a passport is a form of federally compliant ID and DMV is trying to look at this issue holistically to ensure that it can get a federally compliant ID in the hands of Alaskans.

It doesn't necessarily need to be a REAL ID, one is not better than the other, it is just what Alaskans have access to.

REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked whether the UMTs in Anchorage can issue REAL IDs as well as the DMVs.

MS. WRIGHT responded yes, all of DMV's business partners, which DMV calls commission agents, can access REAL IDs if they choose to make that part of their business practice. These partner agencies also include local governments and police departments.

8:20:58 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ referred to the second column in the table labeled "Areas with Access to DMV or Passport Facility" and recalled Ms. Wright stating "reasonable" access to DMV. He asked how "reasonable" is defined and whether, for example, it would be considered a road system connected to a DMV office.

MS. WRIGHT confirmed that road access to a DMV [would be considered "reasonable"]. She noted these regions are very large and DMV has 17 hub locations located across rural Alaska, and that the populations within each of those cities is subtracted from the region's population.

8:22:08 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TARR inquired about the requirements for children as they relate to REAL ID.

MS. WRIGHT answered that minors under the age of 18 do not need to present a form of compliant ID as long as they are traveling with an adult that does have a form of compliant ID.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR surmised that the column labeled "Estimated Population Under Age 5" is included in the table because these numbers are then backed out of the total number.

MS. WRIGHT replied yes. She explained DMV is looking at the population of rural Alaska as a whole and then trying to remove the pieces that DMV knows either don't need a federally compliant form of ID or have an alternative.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked why this column isn't for the population under age 18 rather than age 5.

MS. WRIGHT confirmed DMV does want to know that. She drew attention to the third line from the bottom of the slide that states "K-12 Population" and explained that this is how DMV pulled out those people aged 5-18.

8:23:58 AM

MS. WRIGHT resumed her discussion of slide 6. She stated that after the deductions are made in the table, the resulting number is that approximately 40,000 people could need to rely on an alternate form of ID like a tribal ID. Next, DMV subtracts from 40,000 the K-12 population of about 9,500 students in these communities and the 3,000 REAL IDs that have already been issued to people in these communities, leaving about 28,000 people who would need to rely on an alternative form of ID like a tribal ID or a REAL ID. These numbers do not account at all for the tribal IDs that have already been issued nor that tribal managers across the state are intending to issue.

8:25:08 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY referenced slides 5 and 6 and asked how DMV made its assessments on the demand and whether, for example, it was pulled together through consultation with different communities as well as an assessment of the data, or whether it was solely a tabletop review of the different categories of individuals and an assumption of the types of pieces of identification.

MS. WRIGHT responded that the table on slide 6 does not include any tribal IDs that have already been issued, therefore the table shows the data that DMV knows to be a fact, indisputable and good estimations. She related that with 200 different tribes across the state, it was difficult for DMV to narrow down exactly how many tribal IDs were available, or more importantly had already been issued. Some regions, like the Nome region, are known to have a very high tribal ID presence and their goal was to issue tribal IDs to 100 percent of their members by the REAL ID enforcement date, but there are some regions that DMV doesn't know as much about. In these slides it was her intent to illustrate the known facts about the demand and leave room for the testimony of tribal leaders and their implementation of tribal IDs as a complement to REAL IDs.

8:27:11 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ regarding the category called "region" surmised that this includes people who live outside a community

but who are part of a region. He posed a scenario of someone living outside the community of Hoonah on a different island without road access and asked whether "region" would describe the region around the community of Hoonah or specifically the population and people within Hoonah.

MS. WRIGHT answered it is the entire region regardless of whether it's like a hub city with road access to other communities. Referring to slide 6, she said the only thing DMV took out was in the second column where DMV subtracted the population of areas with access to a DMV. In response to a request for clarification, she explained that the total population in the first column includes all cities within that region that are in rural Alaska regardless of whether they do or don't have a DMV or are connected to other communities on the road system in rural Alaska. The only population that was deducted from each of those regions was the cities that had access to a DMV or passport facility, and this wasn't done until the second column.

8:29:15 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ addressed the term "demand" and offered his perspective that demand tends to be more of a subjective term rather than a specific number; it is an estimate of how many people will want a REAL ID. He asked whether this is the way DMV is using the term "demand" or whether DMV is trying to quantify specifically a numerical identification of demand.

MS. WRIGHT replied that, on slide 6, specific to rural Alaska, DMV is trying to understand the number of Alaskans who don't have access to a form of federally compliant ID. While some Alaskans may have a preference to have multiple identification cards, that was not the intent of this analysis. The division was trying to determine who doesn't have access to anything.

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ stated he is asking questions that reflect the concern from his region on this issue. Given the drop-off caused by COVID-19 in March 2020, he opined, people might need to be reawakened to the requirement of a REAL ID. He inquired whether DMV has put effort into the idea that now might be a good time to reawaken Alaskans that they are going to need some form of acceptable ID or REAL ID to travel on aircraft.

MS. WRIGHT responded that DMV has never stopped focusing on it but concurred there has been much distraction with the COVID-19 pandemic. She said DMV has had very consistent messaging and

uses taglines about the REAL ID when reminding customers of appointments, in email communications, or in phone calls; plus, DMV has just kicked off a campaign to put more things on social media. Also, since this is a joint effort with TSA and other stakeholders, TSA has put lots of effort into a nationwide campaign reminding people about REAL ID using catchy marketing terms and branding in an updated look.

8:34:07 AM

MS. WRIGHT turned to slide 7, "REAL ID: Engagement in Rural Alaska," and stated that DMV has dedicated a senior level staff member to the division's REAL ID outreach and education effort. Specific to REAL ID in rural Alaska, this employee has engaged over 50 tribal leaders or city managers in communities without a DMV presence to educate them on the requirements of REAL ID, assess the need of the community for REAL ID, and provide DMV advice. As well, DMV has pursued many events and speaking engagements at several prominent conferences and other meetings, most of which went virtual or were cancelled. In addition to education and outreach efforts, DMV developed a mobile camera solution and document collection practices that meet the specific and restrictive federal requirements for REAL ID, which has allowed DMV to travel to two rural communities so far and issue REAL IDs. This travel pilot was disrupted by COVID-19 and will be picked up as soon as it is safe to do so.

8:36:51 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recalled that one or two years ago DMV told the committee on the record that one full-time equivalent (FTE) or a partial FTE was committed to reaching out to rural Alaska about the impending deadline for REAL ID. She asked Ms. Wright about the resources currently set aside for ensuring that people are reaching out to rural Alaska on the impending changes.

MS. WRIGHT answered that during this time of COVID-19, DMV has had that same FTE dedicated to engagement of REAL ID across the state and in rural Alaska. The list of communities is currently at more than 50 and the FTE has remained in contact with those people and ensured the sharing of information. Additionally, REAL ID is a significant focus of DMV senior leadership. Once the travel pilot can be resumed, DMV will periodically dedicate two service representatives to travel together to each of these communities to issue REAL IDs. Also, DMV will provide training to the communities in what to expect when DMV gets there to ensure they are set up for success.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY requested a list of the rural DMVs. She related that in her home community of Bethel, which was noted as serving about 18,000 Alaskans in the region, DMV has been closed for extended periods of time. She said there seems to be room for improvement and engagement with respect to the ongoing communications with rural community leaders and to providing rural Alaskans with access to essential state services.

MS. WRIGHT agreed to do so.

[8:40:39 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY requested Ms. Wright to remind the committee of what the mobile unit provides.

MS. WRIGHT replied that technology was developed to create a "DMV station in a box," which has been piloted in two communities. This mobile solution has miniature components of everything found at a DMV station, including a scanner for taking in the required documentation, a [camera] capable of capturing photos that are compliant with REAL ID standards, and a processing engine that can do the data entry and create the card to send to DMV's vendor. After partnering with a community to find a suitable space for setting up the mobile DMV solution in a box, DMV representatives would take this mobile unit to the community and be able to issue REAL IDs to the residents.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recalled that previously a certain threshold of residents had to qualify or have all their paperwork to bring the DMV into a community. She pointed out that people on the road system can go into the DMV as many times as needed to get all their paperwork in order, which is not the case in rural Alaska. She asked Ms. Wright to speak to the process and requirements for community leaders and members to request the mobile unit to travel to their community.

MS. WRIGHT responded that lots of specific documentation is required for REAL ID. For example, someone getting married or divorced, or having a different name on their Social Security card than on their birth certificate, may create complications and the person may need to go back to those source agencies and get the proper documentation before DMV is authorized to issue a REAL ID. To prevent DMV from going to a community and residents not having the proper documentation, and to set the communities up for success, DMV works with a point of contact in each community and trains them on what the REAL ID documentation

requirements are. That person can then pre-screen documents for the residents, setting them up for success when DMV arrives. Regarding minimums, DMV asks that at least 50 people have been confirmed ready by the pre-screener so when DMV shows up it can make that positive impact.

[8:44:39 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY inquired whether the community pre-screener within the community is paid by DMV for their hours of assistance providing these state services.

MS. WRIGHT answered no.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether, as the revised enactment date gets closer, DMV has considered providing supplement staff to travel to communities to do in-person customer service or to pay the individual [in the community] who is pre-screening documents.

MS. WRIGHT replied that DMV is prepared to allocate as many staff members as is needed to make this successful but has not considered supplementing payment to the communities other than providing DMV staff members.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY remarked that given the tens of millions of dollars DMV returns to Alaska's treasury every year it seems the opportunity could be explored to compensate the community resident [acting as a pre-screener] and doing work typically done by a DMV staffer in an office on the road system, or to provide creative partnerships with community leaders, or to supplement that with DMV staff directly who travel.

[8:47:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR noted that some of the requirements are housing documentation or utilities for people who are renters. She asked about the flexibility DMV might have to do things that work for Alaskans who are in shared housing or are in inter-generational living situations.

MS. WRIGHT concurred Alaska has some unique challenges which DMV realized needed to be solved, especially in rural Alaska where there aren't always addresses. In its work in the past to understand the circumstances in communities across the state, DMV has issued policies and letters to tribal leaders and community leaders explaining that DMV does have flexibility in the address verification requirement. She stated that DMV

absolutely must have some sort of a proof of principle residency but has flexibility in the way it can do that. For instance, in rural Alaska DMV can accept a letter from the principal of a school stating that "so-and-so lives on this street and it's the second red house on the right." So, describing the physical location from somebody of authority in the community is acceptable for REAL ID purposes.

[8:49:45 AM](#)

MS. WRIGHT concluded her presentation by moving to slide 8, "Commitment to Transparency." She shared with the committee that it was understood COVID-19 was going to have a presence for an unknown amount of time, so former Commissioner Tshibaka sent a letter to the assistant secretary of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) requesting assistance in issuing federally compliant tribal ID cards. The letter highlighted some of the challenges encountered when DMV travelled to rural Alaska even absent of COVID-19. Because of those challenges, along with the added complication of COVID 19, DMV has been consistently encouraging Alaska's tribal leaders to help their members obtain tribal ID cards which work the same way as REAL IDs for domestic travel. In many cases the documentation requirement for tribal IDs can be easier to obtain.

[8:51:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ORTIZ inquired about where this requirement came from for having to have a REAL ID.

MS. WRIGHT responded that Congress passed the REAL ID Act in 2005, which enacted the recommendation of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States ("9-11 Commission") for the federal government to set standards on the issuance of identification cards. She offered her belief that the origin of [the recommendation] was that some of the terrorists in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the U.S. ("9/11") had legitimate driver's licenses or IDs from states that they shouldn't have. So, the federal government set standards for all states to improve integrity.

[8:52:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK agreed with the chair that if something like this is required then that service to rural Alaska must be provided for getting this ID. He requested clarification on whether the REAL ID photograph is facial recognition.

MS. WRIGHT answered that the facial recognition topic is put in place because it's a fraud prevention measure. She said the photo taken by DMV doesn't leave the state for any national database. She explained that the DMV uses facial recognition software to [run] that photo against DMV's existing database of photos to ensure that there is no fraud occurring when DMV issues these identification cards.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK questioned whether this photo would be sent to the government, stored there, and used down the road for facial recognition.

MS. WRIGHT replied no, it just is run against Alaska's state database.

[8:53:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked how often DMV sees people seeking IDs fraudulently.

MS. WRIGHT responded not frequently, perhaps a handful of times per year. Most commonly it will be a sister trying to get another sister's ID or something of that sort.

[8:54:24 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY invited representatives of rural Alaska communities to provide their testimony.

[8:54:56 AM](#)

CAROL PISCOYA, Vice President, Community Services Division, Kawerak, Inc., stated that Kawerak has been working on this project for the last [three years], and there has been much confusion among community members about REAL ID and why a REAL ID is needed if someone has a tribal ID. None of Kawerak's villages have road access, except one which has summer road access, so members must fly, including for receiving medical care. Not all Kawerak members have tribal IDs, but Kawerak's goal is to provide all members with a tribal ID that is compliant with the REAL ID and that can be accepted by rural airlines and TSA.

MS. PISCOYA said she is glad to hear that DMV is allowing verbal Social Security numbers, but the bigger concern and issue is the birth certificate. Many Kawerak members, especially the elders,

have a difficult time receiving birth certificates or don't have birth certificates to begin with. It takes a long time to get a birth certificate because it is a difficult document to get. Another issue is name changes that don't match on the Social Security number or the Social Security card. Requirements like a Social Security card and a physical address are more easily reachable for Kawerak members.

8:58:40 AM

MS. PISCOYA noted there is a DMV agent in Nome but said many community members cannot afford the expensive flight to Nome just to get a REAL ID. She said she is glad to hear DMV is working on a mobile DMV plan so the people in Kawerak's villages can get a REAL ID without having to travel to Nome. Kawerak has talked about having a mobile DMV but is concerned about who will cover the cost of travel and overnight stays since every village must be flown into. The other concern is about the number of people needed with available documentation for each village.

MS. PISCOYA stated that everything came to a halt with COVID-19, but Kawerak is now returning to where it left off and focusing on getting the REAL ID and ensuring tribal IDs for everyone since TSA now says Kawerak's tribal ID is acceptable. She questioned whether good Internet is necessary to get a REAL ID given there isn't good Internet in Kawerak's villages. She said she likes the idea of having someone in the villages as a point of contact but questioned who will cover the expense for their travel and overnighting in the village for several days. She pointed out that the tribe cannot cover the expense for the mobile DMV. She concluded by stating that Kawerak wants to get REAL ID for its villages, but given the challenges, especially with birth certificates, Kawerak is focusing on all the villages having tribal IDs. She added however that everything is closed because of the pandemic.

9:03:47 AM

CHERIE MCCONNELL, Tribal Affairs Program Director, Kawerak, Inc., stated that an extension [of the deadline for REAL ID] would be very helpful. She related that Kawerak has been working for the last three years to get this tribal ID program up and running. Kawerak was working with a vendor to at least assimilate the REAL ID as best as possible, and just prior to the pandemic hitting Kawerak was informed that TSA would accept federally recognized tribal IDs, which all Kawerak tribes in the

Bering Strait region are and all are producing a form of tribal ID.

MS. MCCONNELL related that Kawerak has spent a significant amount of money to upgrade its system and currently four tribal offices are producing the upgraded travel ID that has all the elements of the REAL ID. The pandemic slowed things down and the vendor also had pandemic issues. Kawerak is hoping to get back up and running and the goal is for all Kawerak tribes to have the upgraded system, the upgraded tribal ID machines, and the ability to produce a product for the community.

[9:05:48 AM](#)

MS. MCCONNELL advised that several Bering Strait communities would like "DMV on-the-go" to come out to the communities. She stressed that training on the ground in the community is very important because Kawerak doesn't want the mobile DVM to come out to the community and not be successful by having people come in and be frustrated that they didn't understand exactly what they needed for getting their REAL ID. She said she supports having someone compensated through DMV to be well trained on the ground in the community to ensure a successful visit by the mobile DMV.

MS. MCCONNELL elaborated on Ms. Piscoya's statement about poor Internet service in the region's communities. She said that prior to the pandemic, a problem with [the mobile DMV] coming to rural communities in the Bering Strait region was that the poor Internet did not support the camera and other elements needed to create the ID. She offered her hope that this has been resolved and related Kawerak's belief that it will have success with getting the tribal IDs to its members in rural communities and that members will have that option.

MS. MCCONNELL said her one concern is that the Lower 48 TSAs may not be familiar with tribal IDs like they are in Alaska. She said she has been assured that it is just a training issue, and she hopes that TSAs in the Lower 48 will understand that they can accept tribal IDs.

[9:08:31 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked how many tribes are in the Norton Sound region and how many of them do or do not offer tribal IDs.

MS. PISCOYA responded that there are 20 tribes in its region and all the tribes do offer tribal IDs. She offered her belief that it is the REAL ID that "we have a difficult time with getting access for our tribes."

CHAIR ZULKOSKY inquired as to how much Kawerak has invested in financial and staff resources to help bring the region into REAL ID compliance.

MS. MCCONNELL replied that the equipment alone would be several hundred thousand dollars and staff time would be at least another hundred [thousand dollars], so easily close to [a total of] half a million dollars in time and equipment. She hasn't put a number on her staff time at this point because it has been such a priority to get done. She is in Nome, and she supervises all the tribal coordinators out in the region; the coordinators are Kawerak employees, and they are trying to educate the population.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked how many Kawerak staff have offered support for educating Alaskans in the region about REAL ID, the importance of tribal IDs, and federally compliant IDs.

MS. MCCONNELL answered that Tribal Affairs has a staff of 23 and there is not one staff member who doesn't work on this. Of the 23 employees, 15 are in rural communities.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY offered her understanding that COVID-19 has put a wrench in much of this rollout and work. She asked whether the state had engaged in consultations with any tribal or local government representatives in Kawerak communities to understand best practices for implementing REAL ID in that region.

MS. MCCONNELL replied that prior to the pandemic there was a lot of communication within her office, and she felt reasonably supported by DMV, but to her knowledge she is not aware of engagement out in the rural communities.

[9:12:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR noted the diversity of the Kawerak region from islands to the mainland and everything in between. She further noted that Nome is the hub with 19 others in the region. She asked whether Ms. McConnell is saying all the [communities] will be able to do the tribal IDs and that basically Kawerak is taking on the responsibility for this instead of the state.

MS. MCCONNELL responded that Kawerak has worked hard to meet that REAL ID element because tribal members need the ability to travel. She said she feels Kawerak doesn't have an option except to be successful at getting these tribal IDs done before the deadline. She is excited about the talk regarding an extension because it will help out Kawerak.

MS. PISCOYA added that the requirements for a tribal ID are not as strict as for a REAL ID. The major requirement is showing that the person is a member of his or her tribe. It is a reachable goal and [given] TSA accepts tribal ID, Kawerak is working hard to make sure that every member who needs one has a tribal ID. If Kawerak gets REAL ID it is happy to do that, but there are many challenges, especially for rural communities, about getting a REAL ID as was mentioned earlier. The definite goal is to get tribal IDs because TSA accepts them.

9:15:26 AM

RICHARD PETERSON, President, Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, stated that the Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska ("Tlingit & Haida") is the largest tribe in Alaska with over 33,000 enrolled tribal citizens across the state, nation, and world. Of the Tlingit & Haida's communities in Southeast Alaska, only a handful are connected to the road system. Tlingit & Haida is a member of the Alaska Regional Coalition, a consortium of four Native regional tribal nonprofits that collectively represents 65,000 Alaskans in 100 rural communities from Ketchikan to Kotzebue. [The consortium] provides service to everyone in the 100 communities, not solely to Alaska Natives. The Coalition's top priority is regional equity in budgeting, and the REAL ID issue is a prime example of what regional equity in budgeting means. State services should be available to residents regardless of where they reside. Tribes and tribal nonprofits are a proven partner with the state for delivery of service in rural Alaska, and perhaps today some ways will surface for how they can help DMV meet its goals of providing equitable service to all residents of Alaska.

MR. PETERSON related that Tlingit & Haida issues top-of-the-line tribal IDs for its tribal citizens that are among the best in the nation, yet it is still heard from tribal citizens that the TSA won't accept them. He said the documentation required to receive a REAL ID is a barrier. For example, villages don't have physical addresses and not everyone in a home pays a bill. Another barrier is when people who have changed their last name

for marriage get caught up with their birth certificate not being in the same name as state issued IDs and passports, and anyone who got a divorce is doubly caught up. An added challenge is getting the paperwork lined up in communities with limited Internet. [A barrier for] people struggling to keep housing is that they cannot provide proof of stable address or provide mail or bills with a physical address. Many elders do not have the required documentation to apply for birth certificates, Social Security card, or marriage license due to various reasons such as moved homes, lost paperwork, or natural disasters. Additionally, many elders and low-income individuals lack the financial resources to pay for the required documentation that is needed. As well, travel from rural hubs to a DMV can cost hundreds of dollars.

MR. PETERSON said [Tlingit & Haida] has discussed some possible solutions for consideration. For example, he continued, the state could assign someone at the DMV to certify that people are a resident when they don't have proper documentation of street addresses or birth certificates. He concluded by stating that Tlingit & Haida is committed to partnering with the state.

[9:19:04 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recalled Mr. Peterson's statement that tribal members with tribal IDs have indicated challenges with Homeland Security or TSA accepting those tribal IDs. She requested him to elaborate further.

MR. PETERSON replied that not all TSA agents are versed or see enough tribal ID traffic, so they will tell tribal citizens that tribal IDs are not an acceptable form when [Tlingit & Haida] is in the federal register. Tlingit & Haida has told its citizens to push back and demand to speak to a manager or someone of higher authority.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked how often Tlingit & Haida hears that this is happening. She further asked whether that is resolved for the individual and whether it causes anxiety for traveling.

MR. PETERSON confirmed it causes anxiety. He related that pre-pandemic Tlingit & Haida would be contacted a couple times a month that this had happened. He said he explicitly uses his tribal ID when traveling and has yet to have a problem. He added that when he has been questioned, he had enough knowledge that [the TSA] backed down.

9:20:55 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY requested Mr. Peterson to discuss the work done by Tlingit & Haida to help the DMV get Alaskan tribal citizens within its region in line with the federal ID requirements.

MR. PETERSON responded that upon hearing the first speaker from the state today mention working with and reaching out to tribes, he contacted his enrollment staff [and was told] that DMV has not at all reached out to Tlingit & Haida, but Tlingit & Haida would love to work with DMV and assist in the villages to do what it can. He said Tlingit & Haida's tribal IDs are on par with the REAL ID as they include a hologram and expiration date. Tlingit & Haida has expensive equipment, has extensively trained staff, and has made extensive investments so that it has top-of-the-line IDs. Responding further, he said the investment has been hundreds of thousands of dollars in equipment and training.

9:22:47 AM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK stated he has four daughters who are Alaska Native and when crossing the [Canada-U.S.] border while traveling from Tok to Haines he has had their birth certificates and Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood (CDIB) cards. He asked whether CDIB cards are being recognized at this point or whether a tribal card is needed.

MR. PETERSON answered that the CDIB card is a federally issued card, so it cannot be denied, but is a backup documentation because it does not have a photo. He advised it is probably now more important to have the tribal ID card with a photo.

9:23:58 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY inquired whether the State of Alaska has engaged in any form of tribal consultation or inquiry with Tlingit & Haida prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to learn potential opportunities for best practices in terms of helping rural Alaskans meet the REAL ID standards.

MR. PETERSON replied that therein lies the irony of what would be considered consultation. He said the state does not formally recognize the 229 tribes in Alaska, so Tlingit & Haida has received information on postcards but no formal consultation.

9:25:08 AM

VIVIAN KORTHUIS, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), noted that AVCP is the largest tribal consortium in the nation with 56 federally recognized tribes as members. The region is located on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta ("Y-K Delta") bordering the Yukon River, Kuskokwim River, and Bering Sea Coast. It is about the same size as the state of Washington, has a population of approximately 26,000 people, and is entirely off the road system, meaning the only way into this region is by flying or by barge in the summer. Transportation in-region is by small plane or boat in the summer and by snowmachine or ice road (if it exists) in the winter.

MS. KORTHUIS stated that regarding REAL ID implementation in rural Alaska, AVCP has invested time and attention over the past few years to how it delivers services. The service delivery model is based on providing services at the village, sub-regional, regional, and beyond the region levels. The question of how the State of Alaska can meet its obligations to serve all Alaskans is a question of service delivery. Alaska's citizens live in the largest cities of Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau, or along the road system, or off the road system in rural Alaska. She said DMV has a model for delivering services to citizens on the road system, with one or more DMV locations in a community or within reasonable driving distance. For the AVCP region there is one DMV location in Bethel. Given the region's size and that there is no road system, this means the region lacks access to a service that the state has the responsibility to provide.

[9:29:07 AM](#)

MS. KORTHUIS stressed that this issue has become critical because, effective 10/1/[21], state issued driver's licenses and ID cards must be REAL ID compliant to qualify as an acceptable form of ID show in order to board a commercial aircraft. Given there are no roads, this means that right now someone in a village must buy a plane ticket to go to the DMV in Bethel at a cost of about \$600 roundtrip. Often it takes several visits to the DMV to accomplish the task of obtaining a REAL ID. Many tribal members in AVCP communities use their driver's license or state ID as a primary or alternative method of identification for boarding commercial flights. Unless members can travel to a DMV location before October 1, they will no longer be able to do so. This means that Y-K Delta residents may be unable to access health care, economic, or educational opportunities because of lack of access to state services.

MS. KORTHUIS further stressed the need for meaningful access to DMV services. She pointed out that currently there is only one full-time DMV position in Bethel, which is not enough to fully service the AVCP region. Additional DMV positions would allow for aggressive and critical REAL ID outreach and support as some rural residents may not be aware that the October 1 deadline is looming. Residents also need assistance to be provided in English and Yupik to ensure that the required documentation is available and complete before traveling to their appointment or for any other purpose. Ms. Korthuis also pointed out that additional DMV positions would make it easier to obtain a REAL ID appointment instead of waiting weeks or sometimes months for the next available appointment which may not coincide with planned trips to Bethel.

MS. KORTHUIS concluded by noting that one-third of all Alaskans live in rural Alaska. She urged that the state redefine and significantly improve the way it delivers services so that all Alaskans can be served. Rural Alaskans are entitled to the DMV services particularly during the REAL ID implementation, she continued, and on behalf of AVCP she asked that they be granted access to these services.

9:32:49 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY requested Ms. Korthuis to speak to AVCP's efforts to educate its beneficiaries and residents about the coming deadline for REAL ID compliance as well as any tribal ID issuance efforts that AVCP has supported.

MS. KORTHUIS replied that AVCP's Tribal Services department has eight employees who work with the 56 tribes to pass along information received by AVCP. She concurred with the Kawerak representatives that the messages about appropriate tribal and REAL ID requirements are confusing. Tribal Services staff coordinate information that is sent out and provide services, including tribal IDs, to those members compacted with the AVCP consortium. Of the 56 tribes in the AVCP region, only about 20 are compacted, and those that are not compacted with AVCP manage their own system of tribal ID. Within the AVCP region, AVCP works directly with approximately 32 tribal administrators. The responsibility is up to the tribe as to whether the tribe engages in AVCP's services, so it can go anywhere from a tribe fully staffing and administering its own program for tribal IDs or a tribe relying on AVCP to provide tribal IDs for that tribe. In any case, there are costs associated with each of those

choices and with the equipment to provide these IDs. It can be anywhere from full organized and ready to administer and, on the other hand with COVID-19, it can be many offices closed and closed offices in the tribal communities means services not being provided.

9:37:02 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked whether Ms. Korthuis recalls consultation in any form or fashion from [DMV] with AVCP or tribes in the Y-K Delta on areas of collaboration or opportunity to ensure a successful REAL ID rollout.

MS. KORTHUIS responded that AVCP has worked with the local office in Bethel and has a good working relationship with that office. She said she doesn't know where the two sites are that DMV tried the portable service pilot projects. She has physically gone to the Bethel DMV office asking if AVCP can partner. Upon hearing the statement today about partnering she asked herself whether it is true because AVCP would definitely want to partner with DMV to assure that the state services to the region and communities would be extended.

CHAIR ZULKOSKY recalled the state's statement today that it has reached a saturation point for Alaskans who desire a REAL ID or a compliant REAL ID if they don't have a tribal ID. She asked whether Ms. Korthuis agrees with that assessment with respect to the tribes and communities in the Y-K Delta region.

MS. KORTHUIS answered that the Y-K Delta region has lots of need. Residents, including elders, travel to the healthcare system in Bethel and Anchorage and young people travel to school. There are many personal stories, including within her own family, about how hard it is to obtain a REAL ID and the availability of that access to people in the villages. She herself had to try three times to get her REAL ID and it was difficult, so she doesn't think the assessment by the state addresses the real need of how important the REAL ID is to communities and individual residents and how much the region needs that service.

9:40:45 AM

CHAIR ZULKOSKY requested Ms. Wright to keep the committee posted on whether an extension is offered on the REAL ID deadline.

9:41:09 AM

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK noted that DMV takes the picture which goes into the state database. He asked whether that database is shared with a federal database.

MS. WRIGHT replied, "No, it is not."

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK inquired whether the federal government is funding REAL ID given that it was forced upon the state by the federal government.

MS. WRIGHT responded that REAL ID was an unfunded federal mandate.

[9:42:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR referenced the statement by Ms. Korthuis that one DMV position in Bethel is not enough to meet the needs of the region and that additional positions would help with enabling the early preparation [by residents]. She recalled Ms. Wright stating that DMV was doing some of that pre-COVID. Representative Tarr noted that she sits on the Department of Administration Budget Subcommittee and except for the big story of DMV closures she doesn't recall any additional staffing. She asked whether Ms. Wright has any comments about that.

MS. WRIGHT confirmed she heard that comment by Ms. Korthuis. She said the challenge in any DMV office which has one or two staff members, is that when one of those people moves on, has leave, or is out sick, it has a [disproportionate] effect on those offices than it would somewhere like Anchorage where DMV has more people who are able to cover. She related that from her experience working with those offices over the last two and half years, the biggest challenge DMV runs into is when representatives move on to another job or have unexpected leave. Regarding additional PCNs in the rural areas, Ms. Wright noted that since this is a short-term problem DMV would then be locked into having those PCNs for additional time. Instead, DMV has identified people within its Anchorage, Fairbanks, and potentially Juneau, offices who could travel if there was a need in rural Alaska. So, instead of having the people come from Bethel to some of the surrounding communities, they might come from Anchorage.

REPRESENTATIVE TARR opined about doing more thinking on ensuring that the resources are available, especially since people's health could be impacted from not having an ID that allows them

to travel. She posited that since DMV has positive revenue perhaps there could be some nonpermanent short-term positions specific to this implementation and communication.

[9:46:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK asked what the exact requirements are for REAL ID.

MS. WRIGHT answered that to get a REAL ID a person must be able to prove his or her identity and lawful status, which are most commonly done through a birth certificate or a passport. A person must also be able to prove his or her Social Security number, which can be done with a Social Security card, a W-2, or 1099, provided they show the full Social Security number. Also, a person must be able to prove his or her principal residency, which can be done via a long list of ways.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK remarked he can see that being a real challenge across different places and it seems work needs to be continued for simplification of ways to get these documents. It seems a solution for rural Alaska would be to schedule the mobile DMV unit three or four months ahead and then work with the village councils and tribal entities to help all those people get the document they need so it doesn't become a waste of time for DMV.

[9:48:12 AM](#)

CHAIR ZULKOSKY asked what the revenue positive amount is that the DMV returns to the state on average every year.

MS. WRIGHT estimated the amount to be roughly \$50 million.

[9:49:05 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs meeting was adjourned at 9:49 a.m.